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Foxes Preying on Shorebird Nests

Foxes are a problem for nesting seabirds this year according to Audubon's Director of Coastal Waterbirds Program Scott Hecker.

Foxes preyed on endangered piping plovers in Duxbury and Plymouth destroying nests and in some cases forcing the shorebirds to abandon their nests.

Plovers lay up to four eggs each season. Duxbury Beach has about 14 plover pairs and nearly 12 young that have fledged.

Hecker said it is possible to protect the birds by surrounding the eggs and young chicks with better fencing in some areas.

The four eggs laid by the first plover pair to nest on the South Shore were destroyed in April. The birds nested in the middle of an experimental site developed by the Duxbury Beach Reservation to encourage the plovers to nest in a cer-

tain area by covering the beach grass with sand and creating the unvegetated habitat favored by the birds.

Reportedly, a fox destroyed the eggs after jumping the four foot high wire fence surrounding the nest and tearing through the net covering the top.

Harbormaster Don Beers said he has seen an increasing number of foxes inhabiting the beach area the past two years. He suspects there are a couple

of dens out there.

"We're talking with state officials to see what to do if anything," said Beers.

Duxbury Beach had a successful program for endangered species for nearly a decade with special nesting areas separated from pedestrian traffic. Beers noted, "It's unfortunate that the nests are being destroyed. It's part of the natural cycle though. We will try and address the problem within reason."